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Text introducers of proverbs and other idioms

This paper focuses on the textual behaviour of both non-sentential and sentential idioms in Czech and English. Twenty idioms of each type in both languages have been verified against the British National Corpus and the Czech National Corpus, each of the same size (100 million words). The idioms have been inspected as to possible cooccurrence with metalanguage phrases or words, called 'introducers' in the paper, accompanying them in texts. The introducers identified in initial searches have then been further investigated in both corpora. A classification and statistics of occurrence of these and typology of use and meaning have been suggested.

Keywords: idioms; introducers; corpus; Czech National Corpus; British National Corpus.

1. Introduction: Introducers

Speakers may sometimes feel it necessary to introduce whatever they are going to say next by a word or combination of words in order to signal that it is coming. Accordingly, whatever is used in this function may be called **introducer**. There are, generally, at least two types of such situations where introducers are used. In the first, one may not be sure about his or her choice of words (or may be in search of it), such as the English phrase *so to speak* or the equivalent Czech one

abych tak řekl. In the second, it is, oddly enough, many idioms and phrasemes (in a very broad sense) that are being introduced by certain phrases or words. It is this latter field of introducers, which seems to be general for languages, that I will be concerned with here in some detail. An attempt has been made here to arrive at a as balanced coverage of the field as possible, using a combination of approaches and drawing data from two very large corpora of the same size, namely the *British National Corpus* (<http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc>) and the *Czech National Corpus* (<http://ucnk.ff.cuni.cz>), each being a representative corpus of 100 million words. On a closer look, introducers occur both before and sometimes after the expression that they introduce; for practical reasons, both are viewed here as a single phenomenon.

Though the question where else in the language recognizable and standard introducers are to be found remains open, a preliminary conclusion seems to point at phraseology and idiomatics as a primary and prominent field. The prototypical use of **linguistic terms** proper, such as *idiom* or *proverb*, these being among candidates for the introducers examined here, is in the linguistic analysis, of course, while the use of idioms is rather different from that. Yet, there is an evident link between the use of idiom introducers and linguistic analysis using terms, namely their **metalinguistic** character.

Despite the analysis having been limited to two languages here, namely English and Czech, one may easily recall other languages using equivalent expressions, such as German *sprichwörtlich*: *Ihr Glück ist schon sprichwörtlich, Ich habe, wie man sagt, in allen Ecken und Winkeln gesucht*, or French *Comme on dit, or comme l'on dit, le renard cache sa queue*, Russian *как гласит народная мудрость* or *как в народе говорится Дареному коню в зубы не смотрят*, or Finnish *Kuten sanotaan, oma maa mansikka, muu maa mustikka* etc. Thus, it seems that the phenomenon of introducers is widespread.

Although it still remains to be specified when and to what extent J. R. Searle's neo-Gricean maxim '*speak idiomatically unless there is some special reason not to*' (Searle 1979: 50) holds, one may, in broad terms, accept it. Provided that by *speaking idiomatically* Searle really means using idioms, too, and that he suggests that their use is thus a standard norm, one must wonder, however, why these, when used, should often be signalled by special devices, namely introducers. Are these to signal some less known idioms, perhaps, and prepare, tune the listener to what is coming or are idioms that special in language as to be in need of being specifically signalled? A more general question, linked to this, is how do we know in fact that something is an idiom when we come across one? On the other hand, it is definitely not true that use of introducers is compulsory. Hopefully,

some hints as to how to answer these questions will emerge in the course of my analysis.

In 1998 (Čermák 1998), in my corpus-based analysis of the proverbial usage in Czech, I was able to distinguish some of the basics of the proverb behaviour for that language. While some 80 % of the proverbial use may be viewed as *prototypical* in the sense that proverbs are used here as general statements expressing accepted truth and shared experience and, in fact, linguistically resuming somehow an event, action etc. mentioned before, some 18 % belong to *non-prototypical* instances of use, such as argumentation, adversative use etc. I hope to show that the use of introducers goes across this distinction and is to be found in both types of use. Moreover, it has also been shown that, for Czech, the standard, prototypical position of the proverb is its postposition relative to what it is related to, i.e. an event, action etc. This is best illustrated by, e.g., the following sentence: *Evil communications corrupt good manners, **says a Greek proverb**, and in the polarised world we live in it is not surprising that good manners and etiquette have gone by the board.* Since introducers (here bold-faced **says a Greek proverb**) tend to occur in a certain position relative to the idiom, one may wonder whether there is some kind of correlation between the two, i.e. the position of the introducer and that of the idiom or, rather, proverb. In contrast to proverbs, non-sentential idioms do not, as a rule, proverbially resume the contents of the text to any significant degree. This distinction and a significant number of forms and occurrences of introducers have been taken up and used in this analysis (for German, see also Ďurčo 2002).

In the following, the distinction between collocational idioms and proverbs, one of the subtypes of sentential or propositional idioms (for the distinction, see Čermák 2001), will be observed and both types of idioms will be examined as to their co-occurrence with introducers.

2.1. *Searching idioms in text*

Generally, all those forms accompanying idiom items in text have been recorded, which may be considered an extraneous element in the text, drawing attention to the idiom used. Both their appearance and non-appearance is of importance. However, the number of items recorded is too small and should be viewed as a preliminary probe only. In what follows, different functional types of idioms have been selected for inspection.

2.1.1. Collocational idioms in text and their introducers

2.1.1.1. English collocational introducers

The list of 20 English idioms examined in the BNC includes the following:

| | BNC Frequency | Introducers |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| <i>head and shoulders</i> | 218 | 0 |
| <i>came to a head</i> | 114 | 0 |
| <i>be in the doldrums</i> | 73 | 0 |
| <i>before one's very eyes</i> | 39 | 0 |
| <i>the nooks and crannies</i> | 32 | 0 |
| <i>lead/go astray</i> | 29 | 0 |
| <i>place in the sun</i> | 28 | 0 |
| <i>like a drowning man</i> | 22 | 0 |
| <i>tough as old boots</i> | 8 | 0 |
| <i>be at daggers drawn</i> | 7 | 0 |
| <i>catch so. with his pants down</i> | 7 | 0 |
| <i>mad as hatter</i> | 6 | 0 |
| <i>go to pot</i> | 5 | 0 |
| <i>fresh as a daisy</i> | 5 | 0 |
| <i>let the grass grow under one's feet</i> | 5 | 0 |
| <i>cry wolf</i> | 5 | 0 |
| <i>dog in the manger</i> | 4 | 2 |
| <i>work like a Trojan</i> | 3 | 0 |
| <i>keep his hand in</i> | 2 | 0 |
| <i>out of a clear blue sky</i> | 2 | 0 |

The results of this search have been rather disappointing. Against expectations, only one English idiom had been twice introduced by some sort of introducer, namely ***dog in the manger*** accompanied by *a kind of* and *really*: *I think the idea of having numbers from each firm is really a dog in the manger attitude*, stressing and fortifying here validity and typicality of the phenomenon named by the idiom. That suggests a very low preliminary ratio of 2 introducers per 586 occurrences (1: 293). Obviously the status of *really* might be questionable from a certain point of view, a point I will not go into here.

2.1.1.2. Czech collocational introducers

| | CNC | Frequency Introducers |
|-----------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>vzít si do hlavy</i> | 1315 | 0 (take it into one's head to do) |
| <i>černá ovce</i> | 323 | 0 (black sheep) |
| <i>hodit/házet flinta do žita</i> | 277 | 0 (throw in the towel) |
| <i>nechat někoho na holičkách</i> | 139 | 0 (leave sb in the lurch) |
| <i>prubířský kámen</i> | 75 | 3 (the acid test) |
| <i>nebrat si servítky</i> | 74 | 0 (not to mince one's words) |
| <i>mít vystaráno</i> | 73 | 0 (no longer need to worry) |
| <i>vzít nohy na ramena</i> | 3 | 0 (take to one's heels) |
| <i>bejt padlej na hlavu</i> | 33 | 0 (be off one's head) |
| <i>kapka v moři</i> | 32 | 5 (a drop in the ocean) |
| <i>mít nahnáno</i> | 25 | 0 (have the wind up) |
| <i>dát někomu co proto</i> | 17 | 0 (give sb a ticking off) |
| <i>prásknout do bot</i> | 14 | 0 (take to one's heels) |
| <i>mít za ušima</i> | 12 | 0 (be up to all the dodges) |
| <i>mít hlad jako vlk</i> | 11 | 0 (be as hungry as a hunter) |
| <i>dobrák od kosti</i> | 13 | 0 (the salt of the earth) |
| <i>neslaný nemastný</i> | 6 | 0 (wishy-washy) |
| <i>ptáček v kleci</i> | 4 | 0 (sb. under lock and key) |
| <i>mít kachní žaludek</i> | 2 | 0 (have a cast-iron digestion) |
| <i>růže mezi trním</i> | 1 | 0 (a rose among the thorns) |

Doing somewhat better than English, Czech employs two types of non-specific words as introducers, all of them being of high frequency in the language. These include adjectives and adverbs *hotový* (*veritable, downright*), *pravý* (*real, genuine, **pravý** prubířský kámen*), *doslova* (*literally*), *přímo* (*virtually, squarely*), particles *přece* (-), *vždyť* (-), and, noticeably, 4 times the adjective *pověstný* (*legendary, renowned*). Apart from the last case, there is no tendency to be observed here. All of the forms found here are used as typical intensifiers in the general language, directing, however, the attention to what is obvious and familiar. The 8: 3796 introducer to proverb ratio (i.e. 1: 474.5) suggests a double, if compared to English.

2.1.1.3. Collocational introducers in text: A summary

Obviously, the number of idiom occurrences observed in both languages is different, Czech scoring, perhaps surprisingly, about 4 times more idioms in text

than English. In view of lack of comparable frequency dictionaries, it is not possible to draw any obvious and serious conclusions, however. Yet, comparing the relative figures for both languages, a remarkable difference is to be observed, namely twice more introducers per a comparable number of collocational idioms in Czech than in English.

2.1.2. Proverbs in text and their introducers

An attempt has been made here to research only those proverbs with the highest frequency, based, in the Czech case, on another reserach (Čermák 2003). Also here, 20 proverbs have been chosen.

2.1.2.1. English proverbial introducers

| | BNC Frequency | Introducers |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| 1 <i>You can't have your cake and eat it</i> | 42 | 2 |
| 2 <i>There is no such thing as free lunch</i> | 36 | 5 |
| 3 <i>Prevention is better than cure</i> | 36 | 15 |
| 4 <i>Chickens come home to roost</i> | 31 | 6 |
| 5 <i>Every cloud has a silver lining</i> | 22 | 10 |
| 6 <i>Better late than never</i> | 18 | 4 |
| 7 <i>Discretion is best part of valour</i> | 15 | 9 |
| 8 <i>All's well that ends well</i> | 14 | 1 |
| 9 <i>Forewarned is forearmed</i> | 13 | 3 |
| 10 <i>A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush</i> | 13 | 2 |
| 11 <i>Let bygones be bygones</i> | 12 | 1 |
| 12 <i>Practice makes perfect</i> | 12 | 5 |
| 13 <i>Don't look a gift horse in the mouth</i> | 12 | 1 |
| 14 <i>Like father like son</i> | 11 | 1 |
| 15 <i>An eye for an eye</i> | 11 | 3 |
| 16 <i>An apple a day keeps the doctor away</i> | 11 | 4 |
| 17 <i>Once bitten twice shy</i> | 9 | 2 |
| 18 <i>Two heads are better than one</i> | 8 | 2 |
| 19 <i>Charity begins at home</i> | 8 | 2 |
| 20 <i>Too many cooks spoil the broth</i> | 8 | 2 |

Without any a priori discrimination, there are, basically, four classes of introducers to be found here:

- (a) nouns, such as *axiom, proverb, maxim, adage, saying, rule, principle, fact, message, conviction, phrase, argument, cliché* (often followed by *that*, e.g. *message that*);
- (b) verbs, such as *remember, conclude, comment, decide, assert, point out, counter*;
- (c) phrases, such as *as they say, mind you, so it is said, they say that, on the basis/premise that, to quote X*, or;
- (d) other, mostly adverbs or conjunctions, such as *always, really, but, though, if – then, definitely, well, so*.

In some cases the introducers are obviously to be found in various forms or with an additional word, such as *commenting, he decided, coining the phrase, the grim fact that.., but the idea was that...* Some of more interesting full examples: *Contrasting **proverbs** with ponderous prose offers a way in: ‘too many cooks spoil the broth’ is a far more expressive way of saying: Over-maximization of the work force is counter-productive because it inhibits the realization of a satisfactory outcome. The **saying** ‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away’ contains some truth., the golden **rule** of banking is..., **If**, however, you get elected and you then have to carry out your policies, **then** of course you face the real world and then you can’t have your cake and eat it problem, The old **adage** that holds prevention is better than cure..., **Deciding** that discretion is best of valour Davidson began...*

Sometimes, reference to the proverb is rather a subtle one, if only a hint at the proverb is present, such as in *Once bitten and things of that **nature**,’ smiled Tuppe*. The proverb might be signalled, however, by referring to the author who has become an authority, such as in *All’s well that ends well, **to quote Shakespeare***. Or it may be veiled as a simile, such as in *This seems **like** looking a gift horse in the mouth but these things do occur*. If unknown, however, it is almost impossible to recognize a proverb, if used as a quotation, in direct speech, such as: *Then, through a loudspeaker, the mother told cheering neighbours in Palermo, Sicily: ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and nudity for nudity.’*

Despite their small frequency and number of items, some introducers exhibit a tendency for repetition and suggest that they might be fixed in language. The

top 5 introducers here include *saying* (7x), *always* (7x), *they say that* (5x), *decide* (5x), *principle* (4x). A limiting influence on the choice and appearance of introducers may be attributed to occasional proverb transformations into something else, such as *silver lining*, being a nominalization. This was, rather exceptionally, found to be the case in 17 out of 22 occurrences of this particular proverb. For reasons to be yet explored, it seems that semantics of proverbs may influence the choice of introducers in some cases. Thus, the co-occurrence of the verb *decide* (in various forms) with the proverb *Discretion is best part of valour* in almost 50 percent does not seem to be due to chance only.

It is worth observing that the obvious candidate, being a direct name English has here, namely *proverb*, has only a marginal frequency (1x), being superseded by *saying* (7x), or, to a lesser extent, by *maxim* (2x), *adage* (2x), *axiom* (2x) and the like. This seems to confirm that normal users cannot always identify the type and function with its proper label, or, simply want to avoid it for some other reason, which is not clear here, however. The low frequency of the *proverb* here is somewhat improved by a double occurrence of the adjective *proverbial*, however. In trying to pin down types of proverbs used with introducers, no firm conclusion can be made. Due to the fact that the *free lunch* proverb uses an introducer five times, it seems that there is no evident link between the introducer and the metaphorical quality of the proverb.

The 20 English proverbs that have been recorded in BNC occurred 351 times, having 69 introducers altogether (19.65%). All English proverbs examined do have at least one introducer to accompany it.

2.1.2.2. Czech proverbial introducers

| | CNC Frequency | Introducers |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| 1 <i>Účel světí prostředky</i> (The end justifies the means) | 89 | 44 |
| 2 <i>Nic není zadarmo</i> (Nothing is for free) | 88 | 28 |
| 3 <i>Oko za oko, zub za zub</i> (An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) | 76 | 24 |
| 4 <i>Mnoho povyku pro nic</i> (Much ado about nothing) | 71 | 0 |
| 5 <i>Pravda vítězí</i> (Truth will prevail) | 50 | 15 |

| | | | |
|----|--|----|----|
| 6 | <i>Vlk se nažral a koza zůstala celá</i> (The wolf has eaten and the goat remained whole) | 48 | 16 |
| 7 | <i>Naděje umírá poslední</i> (Hope dies last) | 44 | 9 |
| 8 | <i>Všechno zlé je k něčemu dobré</i> (Every cloud has a silver lining) | 40 | 10 |
| 9 | <i>Za málo peněz málo muziky</i> (You get what you pay) | 40 | 5 |
| 10 | <i>Boží mlýny melou pomalu, ale jistě</i> (The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind small) | 39 | 6 |
| 11 | <i>Když dělají dva totéž, není to totéž</i> (No two people do anything quite alike) | 39 | 15 |
| 12 | <i>Stará láska nerezaví</i> (Old love is never forgotten) | 39 | 5 |
| 13 | <i>Sliby chyby</i> (Fine words butter no parsnips) | 37 | 12 |
| 14 | <i>Čas jsou peníze</i> (Time is money) | 35 | 21 |
| 15 | <i>Kdo umí, umí</i> (He is certainly good at it) | 34 | 5 |
| 16 | <i>S jídlem roste chuť</i> (The more one has the more one wants) | 33 | 11 |
| 17 | <i>Kdo hledá, najde</i> (Search and you shall find) | 33 | 5 |
| 18 | <i>Pozdě bycha honit</i> (It is late to shut the stable door after the mare is gone) | 32 | 3 |
| 19 | <i>Šaty dělají člověka</i> (Fine feathers make fine birds) | 32 | 10 |
| 20 | <i>Všude dobře, doma nejlíp</i> (There is no place like home) | 32 | 10 |

As in English, four basic classes of introducers have been found here, too:

- (a) nouns, such as *axiom (a.)*, *heslo (motto)*, *pořekadlo (saying)*, *pravidlo (rule)*, *příkázání (commandment)*, *příслови (proverb)*, *rčení (locution)*, *krédo (creed)*, *skutečnost že (fact that)*, *slogan (slogan)*, *úsvloví (phrase)*, *zásada (principle)*, *zákon (law)*;

- (b) verbs, such as *dbát toho že* (heed), *dokazovat že* (prove that), *platit že* (hold), *potvrzovat* (confirm), *říkat si* (tell to oneself), *uvěřit* (believe), *vědět že* (know);
- (c) phrases, such as *dá se říct že* (it may be said), *jak je vidět/jak vidíš* (as seen/as you see), *jak se říká* (as they say), *jak už to bývá* (as is usual), *je známo že* (it is known that), *jak známo, říká se / říkává se* (it is said);
- (d) other, mostly adverbs, particles or conjunctions, such as *ale* (but), *holt* (just), *jenže* (nevertheless), *koneckonců* (after all), *neboť* (since), *ovšem* (of course), *protože* (because), *však* (however).

Some introducers, especially nominal ones, appear with an additional modifier, expressing an attitude of the speaker or fortifying, stressing its validity, such as *immoral slogan* (*nemravné heslo*), *cynical view* (*cynický názor*), *a newly fashionably slogan* (*dnes opět módní heslo*), *it holds relatively* (*platí jen relativně*), *it should hold/be true* (*mělo by platit*). Some of the full examples: *V moderní dopravě **platí** víc než jinde, že čas jsou peníze.*, *Znám jedno **přísloví**, **co praví**, že stará láska nerezaví a v tom je asi celá vada.*, *Jádro jeho myšlenkového arzenálu tvoří právě **zásada** účel světi prostředky.*, *Dělá to šalamounsky **podle hesla**, aby se vlk nažral a koza zůstala celá.* *Ťukala jsem na stroji **metodou** Kdo hledá najde.*, *Po letech putování jsem však **dospěl k tomu**, že všude dobře doma nejlíp.*

The folk or popular and, hence, anonymous, authority of the proverb may be somewhat changed and fortified at the same time if a famous person is mentioned using the proverb, such as *citát z Masaryka* (quote from Masaryk), *Husova slova* (John Huss words), *podle biblického/starozákonního X* (according to the biblical X). Reference to the Bible in the use of *příkázání* (commandment) is obvious and belongs to this group, too. It is worth observing that there has been only a single Czech proverb which did not have any introducer to accompany it in any of its appearances.

Also here, it is the repetition of certain introducers which suggests some regularity and fixity. The top 5 Czech introducers, which have been found here, include *heslo* (slogan 30x), *přísloví* (proverb 16x), *platit* (hold 14x), *ale* (but 14x), *zásada* (12x). However, Czech speakers do not seem to have such difficulty in identifying a proverb and its linguistic label as the English speakers do.

Altogether, the 20 Czech proverbs have been recorded having been used 931 times in the CNC, out of which 254 (over 27 %) have been accompanied by some kind of introducer. There has been the total of 104 distinct introducers found, this

rather large number suggesting both a tendency for improvisation and only a small number of those which might be considered to be stable and fixed.

2.1.2.3. *Proverbial introducers in text: A summary*

The total number of English proverbs is much smaller than that of the Czech ones. Disregarding this, it is also the ratio of the introducers to the number of proverb occurrences that is somewhat smaller in English than in Czech, namely 19.6% : 27.3%. Given that proverbs of roughly equal familiarity are chosen, a further research might address a possible correlation of the use of introducers and of their stability (variability). As for the choice of the form of introducers, one might wonder what the general tendency is—a sentential form of the proverb does not necessarily vouch for the use of a sentential introducer. However, the results suggest an obvious dominance of nominal introducers over anything else, this being mostly due to that there is no verb, in either language, which might be associated with the use of proverbs. Although a germ of such tendency might be seen in the use of the Czech verb *platit, platí (it holds)*, its English equivalent *hold* is marginal only. While the choice of verbs is rather diverse and does not point to any preference applied, it is the nouns which exhibit a preference to use only some, this being reflected in their frequency. At the same time, noun introducers are somewhat different as to their meaning: apart from purely formal ones (see 2.3), it seems, for example, that the English users are not very fond of stressing such meanings as *truth, wisdom, slogan, rule* as the Czech ones are. A minor difference is to be observed in the use of some modifiers here, too. While English may prefer the attribute *old (old adage, old saying, 4x)*, stressing the time quality, Czech resorts to the preferential use of the adjective *známý (renowned, known, familiar, známé přísloví, 8x)*, stressing the generality aspect.

2.2. *Searching introducers in text*

Having had a look at the introducers through the prism of selected idioms of both types above, it is worth considering their independent analysis in both corpora. In doing that, an attempt will be made to pin down those introducers that might be viewed as stable and pertinent for both fields of collocational and proverbial idioms. Basically, only some of those introducers, having been found before (in 2.1), have been examined as to their co-occurrence with (collocational) idioms here, namely *proverbial, proverbially* for English and their Czech equivalents *přísllovečný, přísllovečně*.

2.2.1. Collocational introducers (English and Czech)

| | BNC/CNC Frequency | With Idioms |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>proverbial</i> | 161 | 61 |
| <i>proverbially</i> | 19 | 1 |
| <i>přísllovečný</i> | 343 | 101 |
| <i>přísllovečně</i> | 21 | 1 |

Surprisingly, results obtained here completely reverse the impression one might have from the preceding approach (2.1.1.1.-2.), which did not yield a single stable introducer for English and very few for Czech. Obviously, the greatest and the most surprising difference is to be seen here in the simple frequency, Czech using its adjectival introducer more than twice more than English (343: 161) in 100 million words. On the other hand, the ratio of their use with idioms is almost identical in both languages. In practical terms, every third use of these adjectival introducers is bound with an idiom, roughly, this being a noticeable tendency which has to be stressed. Not surprisingly, adverbial introducers *proverbially*, *přísllovečně* are quite marginal and unimportant in both languages. Possible candidates for a further research might become other adjectives, too, such as the Czech *pověstný* (legendary, renowned) or the English *traditional*.

There is, however, a more theoretical point to be raised here. In the case of *proverbial* and *přísllovečný*, both languages have here frequent **metalinguistic** means and their use does generally belong to analysis in the sense that by mentioning them one employs a tool to point at an idiom or its part. Thus, these natural metalinguistic tools and their use should not be confused with the decomposition of idioms into component parts, this being a favourite argument of those linguists who wish to show that the meaning of an idiom, as well as its form, is decomposable, ‘analysable.’ It is not, and the very existence and use of *proverbial* and *přísllovečný* does point to the contrary, since these belong to both a different level and function in the language (Čermák 2001). If these introducers are viewed as textual metalinguistic pointers, it is, then, not surprising that these are solely allowed to seemingly break the idiom’s formal integrity.

Examples: (1) *This, of course, may be the **proverbial** ‘chicken and the egg situation’, Resembling the **proverbial** Cheshire Cat, SDR General Manager Richard Elliott commented:..* (2) *We **proverbially** think of tossing a penny at random,* (3) *Je to handrkování o **přísllovečný** kozí chlup., Velmi snadno ostatním*

ukážete **příslomečná** záda, (4) 90 % ledovce , které nejsou **příslomečně** nikdy vidět.

2.2.2. Proverbial introducers

Using introducers found mostly above (in 2.1.2.), the corpora have been searched for their co-occurrence with proverbs, which is being compared with their overall frequency. Since many introducers, being of a general nature, are found very often in either BNC or CNC, only limited random samples could be used for analysis in such cases. If proverbs have been found in the sample, their estimated number for the whole corpus has been calculated (marked by *). As a preliminary filtering of Czech introducers has already been made in an earlier paper (Čermák 1998), only those found to function in the field prominently have been used for analysis here. This explains a much larger input list of potential introducers searched, analysed and, ultimately, filtered for English here. Non-introducer functions of these forms have not been analysed, however interesting they might be.

2.2.2.1. English proverbial introducers

| | BNC Frequency | With Proverbs |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>you know</i> | 42477 | 0 |
| <i>remember</i> | 18456 | 0 |
| <i>saying</i> | 17958 | 200* |
| <i>principle</i> | 8106 | 225* |
| <i>truth</i> | 7935 | 0 |
| <i>expression</i> | 7226 | 0 |
| <i>they say</i> | 3087 | 62* |
| <i>phrase</i> | 3044 | 20* |
| <i>wisdom</i> | 1542 | 0* |
| <i>mind you</i> | 1382 | 10* |
| <i>it is said</i> | 566 | 0* |
| <i>slogan</i> | 463 | 0 |
| <i>it is known</i> | 340 | 0 |
| <i>so to speak</i> | 353 | 0 |
| <i>motto</i> | 336 | 1 |
| <i>idiom</i> | 270 | 0 |
| <i>as they say</i> | 232 | 8 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|
| <i>it is claimed</i> | 195 | 0 |
| <i>adage</i> | 115 | 44 |
| <i>(it is) common knowledge</i> | 102 | 0 |
| <i>proverb</i> | 99 | 62 |
| <i>catchphrase</i> | 53 | 0 |

These results both partially corroborate and modify what has been suggested on a sample of 20 proverbs only (2.121). If recalculated, the list of introducers which tend to accompany English proverbs rather often would be the following (in %): *proverb* 62.6, *adage* 38.3, *as they say* 3.4, *principle* 2.8, *they say* 2, *saying* 1.1, *mind you* 0.72, *phrase* 0.65. It is evident that it is only *proverb* and *adage* that are relevant as stable and standard introducers and the rest is only marginal, standing next to accidental and improvised coinage and use.

2.2.2.2. Czech proverbial introducers

| | CNC Frequency | With Proverbs |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>heslo</i> | 5128 | 45* |
| <i>příслови</i> | 978 | 398 |
| <i>pořekadlo</i> | 117 | 40 |
| <i>jak známo</i> | 703 | 27 |
| <i>jak se říká</i> | 439 | 20 |

Slightly different figures from those for English have been obtained for Czech, the list including the following introducers (in %): *příслови* (40.7), *pořekadlo* (34.2), *jak se říká* (4.6), *jak známo* (3.8), *heslo* (0.9). Obviously, only the first two are of any relevance as candidates for stable proverb introducers, the rest being rather marginal. It may come as a surprise that the introducer: proverb ratio is somewhat higher in English than in Czech (62.6% : 40.7%).

2.3. Classification of proverb introducers

Taking into account all of the introducers found in both corpora, including their textual behaviour and support by additional modifiers, an attempt may be made at a classification. A number of distinctions, observed above in passing, has to be applied, such as their form/meaning, non/stableness (non/systematic character),

non/standard use, etc. Here, primarily the data from the text use of the most frequent proverbs (as in 2.1.2.) have been analysed.

2.3.1. *Formal introducers*

A) Standard Introducers

These are set and stable standard words and phrases which accompany proverbs more often than by chance. There is evidently a problem in their being properly targeted at proverbs. Hence some competition and alternative forms may be found here. These include *adage, proverb, maxim, saying, (as) they say* and, for Czech, *příslaví (proverb), pořekadlo (saying), heslo (slogan, motto), jak se říká (as they say), jak známo (as it is known)*. Unlike in English, considerable frequency has been found for a Czech verb *platí* (it holds). There are, however, other differences to be observed here.

a-Type: As for their type, it is primarily nouns which are used here in this capacity, followed by verbal phrases. *Příslaví, že šaty dělají člověka, platí jenom relativně. So maybe it's true what they say about every silver lining having a cloud. Jsou lidé, pro které platí, že účel světi prostředky.*

b-Position: The introducers are both found before the proverb in text and, as a comment. *The old adage 'practice makes perfect' must be kept in mind when one begins to despair. In 1905, something happened; a silver lining on the cloud of doom. 'Forewarned is forearmed', as they say, and the defeat of the murderous invaders proved easy. Sliby jsou chyby - praví české přísloví. Říká se sliby - chyby.* The last two cases illustrate the same proverb being used in both positions, before and after the proverb.

B Non-standard Introducers

These include all sorts of words or phrases the speaker may feel appropriate to use in this function. Though there is some obvious improvisation possible here, the variety and class of formal labels to be chosen from is definitely not unlimited, cf. *rule, idea, policy, notion* or, for Czech, *zásada (principle), teze (thesis), taktika (tactics), filozofie (philosophy), potvrdit (confirm), věřit (believe)* etc. It seems that English does not prefer verbs here to the extent that Czech does (the last two examples). Obviously, only a much larger research might eventually be able to answer the question of the reasons for the choice of this or that form. The limited

freedom of choice may be indicated explicitly, such as in: *He is widely credited with **coining the phrase** 'There ain't no such thing as a free lunch.*

a-Type: The variety of forms used here is much larger, employing, next to nouns and phrases, some other verbs, but, noticeably in the Czech case, also particles and conjunctions. *Louis Gerstner clearly **decided** that discretion was the better part of valour when it came to facing the blue rinse brigade. **Ovšem** sliby jsou chyby.*

b-Position: Also here introducers take up both positions, i.e. before and after the proverb, cf. *Nikdy ani na vteřinu **nezapochybuje**, že účel světí prostředky. Účel světí prostředky - **praví lidová moudrost**...*

2.3.2. Semantic introducers

In contrast to the formal group of introducers, these are viewed from the point of their validity and attitude the speaker wishes thereby to express. Mostly, but not always, this is done by using an introducer from the first group and by an additional attribute or phrase.

A Expressing Attitude

a-Standard Use:

By standard use, general validity of the proverb is meant and confirmed, which is being presented in a number of ways. Thus, mere acceptance of the proverb might be involved, this being, by far, the commonest and neutral case. Alternatively, one might signal that he or she uses the proverb for standardisation of an event by fitting it under the familiar label. One might also wish to project one's esteem to the authority behind the proverb, or even try to persuade the listener about the value of the proverb, etc. Cf. ***They say** two heads are better than one, **Ne nadarmo říká:** Kdo hledá, najde. 'So all's well that ends well, **to quote Shakespeare,**' she said cheerfully., **Husova slova** "Pravda vítězí" kráčeji dějinami a odmítají uznávat hranice. One might even resort to an appeal, recommendation or reminder: **Remember:** Practice makes perfect. **It is worth remembering** that 'practice makes perfect., **Nenapadá vás,** že všude dobře doma nejlip? Direct confirmation is suggested by the following two cases: *This dual approach often works, **proving** that two heads are better than one. S jídlem roste chuť o tomto **příslloví** jsme se opět mohli **přesvědčit.** Validity of the proverb may also be stressed, such as in *Whatever the truth, the NASA team **insists** that the Pinatubo cloud does have one silver lining.***

A rather special case of use is signalled if the proverb's validity is presented as being prototypical and model-like, this being mediated by its use in a comparison (simile), cf. *Now she feels it's a bit like looking a gift horse in the mouth.*

b-Modified use:

A proverb's validity may not, however, be accepted entirely and the speaker may wish to dispute or weaken it, such as in: *It won't be very good for the petrol companies, but every cloud tends to have its silver lining, 'Better late than never' being his unoriginal version of the truth.*

In some cases, it may be refuted (negated) and the converse may be indicated, such as in: *Pravda zkrátka přestala vítězit. Nemohl přijmout, že účel světi prostředky za každou cenu.*

B Argumentation/Manipulation

Finally, using an introducer may indicate that the speaker, basically accepting the proverb's truth, uses it in a more sophisticated way to support his or her own argument, as a generally accepted reason or motive for action, or even as the very target of the speaker's action or behaviour.

a-Argument proper: *On the basis that 'forewarned is forearmed' the fundamental principle underlying the Companies Acts has been that of disclosure. But perhaps a better title might be how to prevent things going wrong, on the argument you know that prevention is better than cure. Protože čas jsou peníze, v kapitalismu by se to stávat nemělo.*

b-Causality: *Even if a money cost can't be put on it, then prevention is better than cure... Charity begins at home, she concluded...*

c-Other: A goal (aim) of one's action may be seen in the Czech case *To se má dělat tak, aby se vlk nažral a koza zůstala celá.* Still other type of use (a circumstantial one, introducing a possibility) may be seen in *When it comes to women, Clint Eastwood likes to have his cake and eat it.*

2.3.3. *Mixed introducers (Formal-semantic)*

Obviously, both types, the formal and semantic one, may co-exist, as it may be seen from some of the examples above. Let us consider, briefly, two more cases. *Hodí se na to české přísloví - jako třeba Sliby, chyby. But as the old saying*

goes, it's better late than never, and better never late! The Czech one manages to select the proverb (*třeba*), name it (*české přísloví*) and suggest its appropriateness (*hodí se*) at the same time. The English one, suggesting formally, though not properly, that there is a proverb involved (*as the old saying goes*), employs the proverb as a basis for a further modification, stressing its validity, too (*and better never late*).

3. Conclusions

However inspiring and revealing, the results of this limited probe, presented so far, do require a further research, based on more data. Nevertheless, a few more concluding remarks might be relevant.

While, on the one hand, no single introducer has been found to fulfil its role uniquely, having, thus, a monopoly on the introducing function, some of the introducers, on the other hand, do show a pronounced tendency for this.

Semantically and pragmatically, proverbs express truth (a view stated over and over again) which is general, typical and, often, accepted as normative, while being, formally, familiar to most users. What has not been investigated here and what is thus merely accepted as true is the types of situation in which proverbs are used. Most probably, this might prototypically be seen as one between two partners knowing each other, where there is the distinction older-younger and experienced-less experienced to be observed. The use of introducers seems to confirm this. Since speakers ideally belong to older and more experienced of the two, introducers and proverbs are used by them. Accordingly, the prevalent use of both proverbs and their introducers should be in direct speech, while no such conclusion is true of collocational idioms. Yet in practice, the distinction between direct and indirect speech is rather blurred and it is often difficult to distinguish between them.

Though different in their frequency and variety of forms found, there seems to be no basic difference in meaning and function between introducers used with the collocational and proverbial idioms.

Functionally, proverbs might be viewed as belonging, primarily, to two major classes, the factual one (committing the speaker to the truth) and voluntative or directive one (aiming at producing some effect on the hearer, see Čermák, 2003). Hence, it is in the semantic types of introducers where one might discern this, but no specific indication of this has been made here.

Next to the obvious metalinguistic function of the introducers (see 1. and 2.2.1.), elements of the phatic communicative function (or communion, following Malinowski and Jakobson) can be found with some introducers, too. Thus, using such introducers as *as they say* obviously establishes a desirable atmosphere or maintains social contact, which is what the phatic function is about.

There is a number of minor differences between both languages observed above, some of which (as the Czech tendency to use verbs for the introducers) might be attributed to different typological status of these languages.

To sum up the results from both the search of proverbs and introducers, each having been used as a different starting point, an ordered synopsis of both types may be presented for proverbs (x standing for a marked difference and : for a similarity).

| | Proverb → Introducer (Frequency in Nos) | | Introducer → Proverb (Frequency in %) | |
|----------------|---|---|---|----|
| 1- saying | 7 | x | 1.1 | -5 |
| 2- principle | 4 | x | 2.8 | -4 |
| 3-7 phrase | 2 | | | |
| adage | 2 | x | 38.3 | -2 |
| axiom | 2 | | | |
| maxim | 2 | | | |
| (as) they say | 5 | : | 5.4 | -3 |
| 8-9 cliché | 1 | | | |
| it is said | 1 | | | |
| proverb | 0 | x | 62.6 | -1 |
| 1- heslo | 30 | x | 0.9 | -5 |
| 2- přísloví | 17 | : | 40.7 | -1 |
| 3- zásada | 13 | | | |
| 4- platí | 13 | | | |
| 5- říká se | 8 | | | |
| 6- rčení | 5 | | | |
| 7- jak se říká | 3 | : | 4.6 | -3 |
| 8- úsloví | 3 | | | |
| 9- jak známo | 2 | : | 3.8 | -4 |
| 10- pořekadlo | 2 | x | 34.2 | -2 |

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METALINGVISTIČKO OKRUŽENJE POSLOVICA I DRUGIH VRSTA FRAZEMA

U ovom se radu ispituje metalingvističko okruženje frazema rečeničnog i frazalnog tipa u češkom i engleskom jeziku. Izvršena je analiza metalingvističkog okruženja za dvadeset frazema u obama jezicima u Britanskom nacionalnom korpusu (*British National Corpus*) i u Češkom nacionalnom korpusu, od kojih oba broje 100 milijuna riječi. Metalingvističke fraze i riječi koje su pronađene u tekstu u ovom se radu nazivaju ‘metalingvističkim uvodnicima’ (*introducers*). Metalingvistički uvodnici identificirani inicijalnim pretragama korpusa zatim su pobliže istraženi u obama korpusima. Na kraju slijedi klasifikacija i statistički podaci te prijedlog tipologije njihove upotrebe i značenja.

Ključne riječi: frazemi; metalingvistički uvodnici; korpus; Češki nacionalni korpus; Britanski nacionalni korpus.